

Weekly Column for December 16, 2004

Last Saturday I was driving to a fire on Oakwood Avenue when I heard a news report that the Guardian Angels wanted to come to Troy because the area around Russell Sage College is not safe. I nearly drove off the road when I heard that.

Immediately I decided to put out a statement to the media, that not only was the area around the downtown campus extremely safe, but the City of Troy as a whole is the safest city in the area and at this time we do not need the help of the Guardian Angels.

Let me first say that I am not afraid to ask for help when I feel it is needed. However, for too long, people have taken pot shots at Troy, and one area that is constantly used to bash us is safety. If these people would take a moment to look around, and even glance at the crime statistics, they would see exactly how safe Troy is.

In my first year in office, we have taken on numerous efforts in an attempt at controlling crime. The first aspect was to clean the streets of Troy like they have never been cleaned before. In a few short months, the difference was monumental. When there are clean streets, people take pride in their neighborhoods, as prescribed by the broken windows theory, and quality of life improves.

Once the streets became cleaner we concentrated on several other areas, namely prostitution and drugs. Since early this year, the Troy Police Department has been constantly cracking down on these offenses, at first by themselves, and then through the Governor George Pataki's Project Impact. This has been a success. We also passed legislation limiting the hours of convenience stores, some of which had become a haven for people to hide in while plying their trades.

Are we perfect? Certainly not, we have a long way to go. But we're making strides, and in my opinion, the Guardian Angels would only hurt us at this time, not help. When you have these men, whom I respect very much for what they try to accomplish, patrolling your city, you're left saying that you cannot patrol it yourself. That is another terrible perception to have, and one Troy does not need.

I know that Russell Sage was also concerned about Curtis Sliwa's remarks concerning the school as well. Sage prides itself on being a safe community, and it is just that. Through combined efforts of the City and the school, the area is completely safe. Attempting to make a point against that is either ignorance or arrogance.

So at this time, I do not feel we need the Guardian Angels. I understand the hesitancy of some that is crazy, but it is my honest feeling. In the future, if the City of Troy needs help, you can be assured that I will be the first one to ask for it.

Enjoy this final week before Christmas and then New Year's. It can be a stressful time, so simply remember what is important and enjoy your friends and family. See you next week.

